

Let's Talk: Beyond COVID Forum

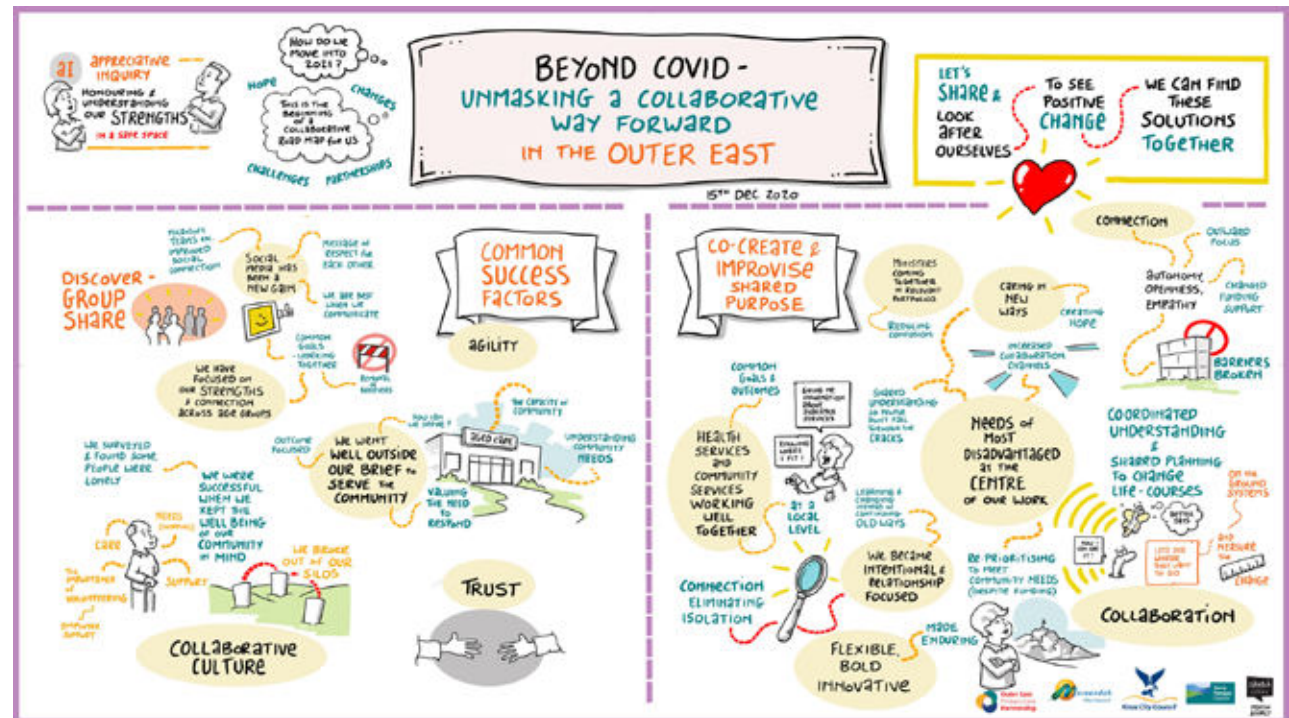
The spread of COVID-19 throughout Australia in 2020 presented new challenges for communities, service providers and the nation as a whole. Organisations were forced to rapidly adapt their models of service delivery, and those working at a grass-roots level needed to find new ways to stay connected with community and support those in need.

As 2020 drew to a close, Maroondah Council approached the Outer East PCP to deliver an innovative forum for service providers; one where organisations could connect, share their learnings from adapting to COVID-19 and strengthen collaborative opportunities across the catchment. The Victorian Government, Knox Council and Yarra Council were also significant partners in this project.

"We'd spent the entire year really being in 'response' mode, as the nature of COVID continued to affect our organisations and communities. This was a unique opportunity for us to pause, reflect, and connect over some of our shared learnings." – Kirsten Jenkins, Maroondah City Council

The Outer East OEPCP funded the forum and embraced a leadership role in its promotion and delivery. Attended by more than 20 organisations from across the Outer East, the Forum gave recognition to the strong partnerships which exist across the catchment. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, the forum was held on Zoom, a fitting platform for the way many have learned to operate throughout 2020 and beyond.

The Let's Talk: Beyond COVID Forum was facilitated by The Change Lab and embraced an appreciative enquiry approach, seeking to discover what was strong and effective throughout the sector in 2020 and how those strengths and learnings could be harnessed into 2021 and beyond. The Forum also recognised that the nature of COVID-19 restrictions had necessitated new partnerships and ways of working, including innovations and opportunities which might not have existed otherwise.



The forum was an overwhelming success and a celebration of the resilience and relationships which exist across the Outer East. With restrictions continuing into 2021, it also provided an excellent opportunity to take the best of the partner agencies' learnings from 2020 and chart a course through the next phase of the pandemic with a clear vision for collaboration, partnership and a clear focus on the health and wellbeing of Outer East communities. ●

www.oepcp.org.au/wp-content/uploads/Lets-Talk-Outer-East-Final-Report_compressed.pdf

Project highlights

Innovative forum for organisations in the Outer East to engage with one another, share knowledge and strengthen collaborative approaches into the future.

Key outcomes

- An understanding of how the sector adapted to COVID-19 during 2020.
- Identifying successes and learning how to build on these factors.
- Generating new possibilities for collaboration into the future.